



A public health revolution can reduce the growing cancer burden for the young

BY DEVRA DAVIS, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR - 06/06/17 10:40 AM EDT

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As national debate swirls about whether health plans should cover pre-existing conditions, we need to ask how we can reduce the demand for health care in the first place. Every administration since President Carter has recognized the undeniably high and continuing costs of dealing with lead in drinking water and the residues of the tobacco epidemic make clear the value of preventing or curbing toxic exposures.

For those dangers, only after irrefutable evidence that people had become sick and died were steps taken to reduce dangerous conditions. But when it comes to curtailing other avoidable environmental health threats, U.S. authorities seem to be taking a show me the bodies approach.

No where is that more evident than when it comes to how we are treating cellphones and wireless radiation and our children today. Spurred by growing independent scientific reports linking wireless microwave radiation to a range of health problems, [policies](#) to reduce exposures especially for children are moving forward in France, Israel, Argentina, India and Taiwan. In contrast in the U.S. we are caught up in a well-financed national push for more and more wireless in more and more places, making it faster and easier to download virtual reality porn, videos, and apps for infants, toddlers, and elementary school children.

United States policy makers are on the verge of [funding platforms](#) that would immerse our children and ourselves with [newer, faster forms](#) of wireless radiation that have never been tested for safety. [Legislation](#) that would allow the blanketing of our communities with several thousand new 30-foot tall antennas installed every hundred paces is being pushed forward overriding objections from property owners or schools.

Outside the United States, educating children and young adults about reducing exposures to cellphone radiation has become a critical [international public health concern](#). In high-tech countries like Israel, France, and Belgium, phones must be sold with headsets and information about keeping phones off the brain and body.

What's driving this international push to reduce exposures? Studies tying long-term cell phone use to malignant brain cancer have become stronger since 2011 when the [International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Organization](#) (WHO) confirmed a possible link. The [World Health Organization](#) reports a global increase of 13 percent in childhood cancer incidence over two decades.

In the United Kingdom, rates of malignant brain cancer have risen while those of other forms of brain cancer have dropped. [Rates](#) of malignant brain tumors in the United States have now surpassed leukemia as the [top cause of cancer deaths](#) in adolescents and young adults. Furthermore, the [American Cancer Society](#) reports millennials have four times more colorectal cancers than baby boomers.

Some scientists argue that cancer is "just bad luck." But these troubling increases in unusual and highly malignant cancer in the young cannot simply be chalked up to sudden random shifts in our genes or radical improvements in the ability to find the disease. We have to ask whether the phenomenal explosion of personal cellphones kept close to the body for hours per day and other changes in our shared [environment](#) could [underlie](#) these perplexing increases.

Growing numbers of [neurosurgeons](#) believe that a lousy role of the dice cannot explain increasing incidence of young adult cancers and that part of the explanation for this surge in malignant brain cancer lies in our love affair with cellphones. Massachusetts state legislators are tackling this important issue with [bills](#) in process that inform the public about wireless radiation and explain how to reduce exposures. Using speakerphones and headsets; using airplane mode when carrying phones in a pocket, and other precautions to distance the device from our bodies are becoming standard practice.

Concerns about cellphones are not new. What is new is that more [scientific studies](#) have emerged warranting the need to reduce exposures to cellphone radiation emissions. The industry that is profiting from the rapid growth of cellphones has [long tried](#) to keep the health hazards of this technology a secret. But all of that is changing. A newly published [report](#) in the American Journal of Epidemiology finds that Canadians who have used cellphones for 558 hours or more have more than a doubled risk of brain cancer. These findings strengthen the [association](#) between cellphone use and glioma, an aggressive type of brain cancer.

Thanks to [independent FCC certified tests](#) from RF Exposure Lab in San Marcos, we know that when popular phones are tested in positions directly against the body, such as in the pocket, the body absorbs 3 to 4 times more radiation than tests conducted by commonly used outdated systems. Corroboration of this reality comes from [French government](#)

health agency testing that found that 90 percent of tested phones failed when tested in “body worn” positions. In other words, when cell phones are tested in the ways people commonly use cellphones, resting against the body such as in a pocket or bra, the amount of radiation penetrating into the body exceeds maximum limits put in place by governments.

The real-world implications of this are quite simple: If you walk around with a cellphone in your pocket, tuck it into your bra, rest it on your lap, keep it in your back pocket as you work, or hold it up to your eyes to watch virtual reality, your body could be absorbing far more radiation than the antiquated 20-year-old regulatory limits.

So, is it “just bad luck” that a young man who has been using his phone for hours every day since age 8 is diagnosed with a deadly brain cancer at age 23? Or that a 21-year-old young woman suddenly develops multiple breast cancers right under the antennas of the phone she had stored in her bra? Or that a 24-year-old man develops rectal cancer close to his blue-jeans back pocket now stamped with the faded outline of his phone?

Growing numbers of pediatricians and educational technologists are warning that prolonged use of computer screens can affect children’s eyesight and physical and mental health and limit their abilities to play with others, problem solve, and interact socially. It would be nice to learn why one of the most successful tech businessmen in the world, Bill Gates, allowed none of his children to use a cellphone until age 14. Steve Jobs refused to allow his young children to play with the iPad, because “We think it’s too dangerous for them.”

The absence of public knowledge about evidence of harm is not proof of safety, rather it is proof of the effectiveness of the public relations campaigns of the wireless industry to create an extraordinary demand for a technology that has never been evaluated for its impact on public health or the environment. When it comes to the health of our children and the environment, we can place our trust in the Lord, but all others really have to provide data. A new analysis published in the American Journal of Epidemiology provides more hard evidence linking cell phone use to brain cancer after only 558 hours of cellphone use. How long will it take a teenager to log 558 hours of cell phone use?

Taking its duty to protect public health seriously, the City of Berkeley makes sure its residents are aware that manufacturers advise all of us to keep phones off the body to avoid exceeding radiation test limits. The cellphone industry objected in court, arguing that requiring the posting of information on FCC test distances violates their right to free speech. So far, the courts have allowed the Berkeley Right to Know to trump the Right to Profit. Let this important revolution in public health finally begin.

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